

## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A software update distribution system for distributing a software update over a communication network for distribution to client computers, comprising:

a root update service node; and

a plurality of child update service nodes;

wherein the root update service node and the at least one child update service node are organized in a hierarchical manner such that the root update service node is a parent update service node to at least one child update service node, wherein each update service node, except the root update service node, has a parent update service node, wherein each of the plurality of child update service nodes is configured to operate as a parent update service node to another child update service node, and includes an administration application programming interface (API) through which an administrator establishes a set of rules for distributing software updates from the update service node to its child update service nodes, and wherein at least one child update service node of the plurality of child update service nodes is a parent update service node to another child update service node of the plurality of child update service nodes; and

wherein the root update service node obtains a software update from a software provider, and wherein each of the at least one child update service nodes obtains the software update for distribution to client computers by obtaining the software update from its parent software update node.

2. (Original) The software update distribution system of Claim 1, wherein the root update service node comprises:

an update store for storing software updates;

an update web service through which the root update service node distributes software updates to its child update service nodes over the communication network; and

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a software provider interface through which a software provider submits its software update over the communication network to the root update distribution node.

3. (Currently amended) The software update distribution system of Claim 2, wherein each of the plurality of child update service nodes comprises:

an update store for storing software updates;

an update web service through which the child update service node obtains software updates from its parent update service node over the communication network, and through which the child update service node distributes software updates to its child update service nodes over the communication network;

~~an administration application programming interface (API) through which an administrator, using an administration user interface, establishes rules for distributing software updates to its child update service nodes; and~~

a child update module for determining which software updates are available to be distributed to its child update service nodes according to the established rules.

4. (Previously presented) The software update distribution system of Claim 3, wherein each of the plurality of child update service nodes further comprises:

a reporting module for generating and sending update activity reports to the parent update service node;

an authentication and authorization module for determining whether an update service node is authorized to obtain software updates from the child update service node; and

a client update module for distributing software updates to client computers.

5. (Original) The software update distribution system of Claim 4, wherein the update store comprises an update content store in which the update payload for the software

update is stored, and an update information store in which update metadata for the software update is stored.

6. (Original) The software update distribution system of Claim 5, wherein the child update service node obtains the software update from the parent update service by obtaining update metadata for the software update from the parent update service node, and separately obtaining the update payload for the software update from the parent update service node.

7. (Original) The software update distribution system of Claim 6, wherein the child update service node obtains the update payload for the software update from the parent update service node in a just-in-time fashion.

8. (Original) The software update distribution system of Claim 4, wherein the client update module distributes software updates to client computers according to rules established by an administrator via the administration API using the administration user interface.

9. (Original) The software update distribution system of Claim 8, wherein the root update service node further comprises a client update module for distributing software updates to client computers.

10. (Original) The software update distribution system of Claim 3, wherein the child update service node may be selectively configured to periodically obtain available software updates from the parent update service node.

11. (Currently amended) An update service node for distributing software updates to client computers and to child update service nodes, wherein the update service node is organized in a hierarchy of a plurality of similarly configured update service nodes, the update service node comprising:

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an update store for storing software updates;

an update web service through which the update service node obtains software updates from a parent update service node over a communication network, and through which the update service node distributes software updates to child update service nodes in the hierarchy over the communication network;

an administration application programming interface (API) through which an administrator, ~~using an administration user interface,~~ establishes a set of rules for distributing software updates to its child update service nodes; and

a child update module for determining which software updates are available to be distributed to its child update service nodes according to the established rules.

12. (Original) The update service node of Claim 11, further comprising:

a reporting module for generating update activity reports to the parent update service node;

an authentication and authorization module for determining whether a child update service node is authorized to obtain software updates from the update service node; and

a client update module for distributing software updates to client computers.

13. (Original) The update service node of Claim 12, wherein the update store comprises an update content store in which the update payload for the software update is stored, and an update information store in which update metadata for the software update is stored.

14. (Original) The update service node of Claim 13, wherein the update service node obtains the software update from the parent update service by obtaining update metadata for the software update from the parent update service node, and separately obtaining the update payload for the software update from the parent update service node.

15. (Original) The update service node of Claim 14, wherein the update service node obtains the update payload for the software update from the parent update service node in a just-in-time fashion.

16. (Original) The update service node of Claim 12, wherein the update module distributes software updates to client computers according to rules established by an administrator via the administration API using the administration user interface.

17. (Original) The update service node of Claim 11, wherein the child update service node may be selectively configured to periodically obtain available software updates from the parent update service node.

18-29. (Canceled)

30. (New) A method for facilitating the distribution of software updates in a hierarchical arrangement, the method comprising:

providing a root update service node of a hierarchy of update services nodes;

providing a plurality of child update service nodes organized in a hierarchy under the root update service node; and

providing software update information corresponding to software updates for distribution to client computers connected to update services nodes in the hierarchy of update service nodes;

wherein the root update service node is a parent update service node to at least one of the plurality of child update service nodes and wherein each update service node, except the root update service node, has a parent update service node;

wherein each of the plurality of child update service nodes is configured to operate as a parent update service node to another child update service node and at least one

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child update service node of the plurality of child update service nodes is a parent update service node to another child update service node of the plurality of child update service nodes; and

wherein each of the plurality of child update service nodes includes an administration application programming interface (API) through which an administrator establishes a set of rules for distributing software updates from the update service node to its child update service nodes.